Interview With the New York Times
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Vietnam and China

Q. Thank you for seeing us. As you probably know, we're preparing to write this fairly lengthy series that looks back over the past 8 years. And we felt we'd start with the Vietnam trip, because it seemed at moments as if this was sort of an effort to put bookmarks on your approach to defining the world these days. When you came into office, there was still a trade embargo on Vietnam. As you leave, you have used every one of your economic and diplomatic levers to draw them out. And we saw the response on the streets.

Looking back now, are you convinced that this approach that you developed of using this web of economic engagement as thoroughly as you can, not only in Vietnam but with China, attempts with North Korea, has actually worked, and that's proved your thesis that as you engage more economically, you actually do bring countries around to democracy—this despite the Vietnam and Chinese examples?

The President. Well, the short answer is, yes, I think it is—I think it will work. But I think it's a question of whether you—whether we're prepared to pay the price of time and what the options are. I don't think there's any way for us to bring openness and freedom to China or to Vietnam more quickly than the one we've adopted. I don't think that either country—I don't think we have any levers of pressure, for example, that would bring change more quickly. And I think the downsides of adopting a different approach are greater than the upsides.

I think the—first, let me back up and say, my whole view of this period in which we're living is that the world is becoming exponentially more interdependent, and with all kinds of new opportunities and all kinds of new dangers—that if you want to make the most of an interdependent world, you have to let people within your country have more freedom over the basic aspects of their lives.

Now, in different ways, the Chinese and the Vietnamese have taken the position that they're going to allow a lot more personal freedom. In China they even have a million village elections now. But they're going to try to keep a one-party state with control of the political apparatus, with the intent at restrictions on political speech and freedom, and regrettably, often religious speech and freedom.

So the question is, how can we respond to the good things about the decisions they've made, and how can we hasten the day when, from our point of view, they'll give up a lot of the bad things? And it seems to me that this sort of combination of economic and political integration and cooperation, where possible—for example, we cooperated with the Chinese in dealing with a lot of the North Korean issues; we cooperated with the Vietnamese most clearly in the MIA area—and then having a dialog and having fairly frank and open disagreements, where we still have disagreements—which you saw in China with my press conference there and the speech I gave at the university in Vietnam—I think that's the best way to do this.

It depends on whether you think—I don't think freedom is inevitable or the triumph of democracy is inevitable. But I think it is rendered far more likely by the power of our example and the strength of our engagement and having more oneness, having more people in these other countries who come from the United States and from other places where people are freer.

So I think that, from my point of view, that it will be a successful policy. But it has to be pursued, and we have to be patient, and we have to realize that we have limited control over other people's lives.

Q. What kind of timeframes are we talking about for China and Vietnam, do you think?

The President. I don't know. I think, if you look at Vietnam, it was really interesting to me when I was there to see the differences in the approaches taken sort of in gradations from the mayor of Ho Chi Minh City to the Prime Minister to the President to the General Secretary of the party. And if you—the way they—even the way they talked was so much a function of their responsibilities and the extent to which they are dealing with the emerging world, I was actually, on balance, quite encouraged by what I saw there and where I think it's going.

In China, I think it's really just a matter of time. If you go to—as I've said, you've got a lot of different things going on in China. It's a vast country. But if you go to Shanghai, or just go out in those villages—like I went to a couple of those little villages, where they elected their mayors and all—I think there's more and more personal freedom, freedom of movement, freedom of choice of career, freedom in educational choices, things that did not exist before. And I think that eventually the country will become more open and free if we do the right things and they do the right things. There is always the possibility you will have people get in office in either country that will make mistakes. But I think that the policy is right, and the direction is right.

Q. Mr. President, sort of coming back to Vietnam from a domestic side, were there ways in which you felt your going there and the trip had brought you full circle kind of culturally and politically? Did you think there was any way in which you'd brought a certain kind of closure to your own personal relationship with, obviously, that incredibly tense period in our national life of 30 years ago, or for the country, at a time when, for admittedly very different reasons, the country once again seems to be somewhat politically polarized and divided?

The President. Well, it was interesting—I had this encounter with the General Secretary of the party, sitting there with Pete Peterson, who was a POW for 6½ years. And he is, parenthetically, not just our Ambassador but a very good personal friend of mine—we've been close for years—and a man who is astonishingly free of resentment and demons, given what he went through.

But—and some of this has been reported, but basically, the General Secretary was saying—he was the most hard-line of all the people I talked to—and he said, "Well, we can talk all about the future here, but we've got to get the past straight. And we didn't invade your country; you invaded our country, and it was terrible. And I'm so glad that so many of the American people opposed it. I'm glad you opposed it. I'm glad the people were in the streets. But it happened, and we've got to somehow work this out."

And I looked at him, and I said, "If you want to talk about history, we can, but"—and it's true that we were deeply divided over the war. I said, "Most of our division related to what the character of the conflict was and what if any impact we could have on it." But I said, "Mr. Chairman, we were not France. We were not colonialists. We were not imperialists. And people like Ambassador Peterson that served 6½ years in one of your prisons, they came here believing they were fighting for freedom and self-determination for the South Vietnamese."

I said, "Now your country is unified, and you are at peace. But you still have to face the age-old questions: How much of the economy should the state control? How much should be in private hands? How much personal freedom should people have, and how many decisions should be made by their families, their villages, or the state?" And I said, "I think it would be better if we had these discussions looking to the future." It was a fascinating encounter.

But for me, I think if it was liberating, it was because it sort of—well, let me back up. I asked Pete Peterson a question, because when we came there—and we had the state arrival the next morning, and then we were standing there and they were playing the anthem, and they were playing—all these things were happening. For about 15 minutes, I was just—all I could think about were my four high school classmates who died in Vietnam and my Oxford roommate who committed suicide. That's all I could think about for about 15 minutes. And then finally I was sort of—it came time to be President, and I sort of snapped out of it.

So after this arrival ceremony, I asked Pete, I said, "Pete, how long were you here before you quit thinking about what happened to you before?" He said, "Thank God, only about an hour." It was very interesting. I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Well, I couldn't let—I mean, how could I not think about it? And then we had a couple of crises, mini-crises, that I had to be Ambassador to deal with, and I got out of it." He said it never happened again. He said, "I'm okay now. I just get up every day and go to work, and it's part of my past and part of my life. We're dealing with the future."

I think that's how I felt. After about 15 or 20 minutes, I was into what was going on. I was grateful that we were where we are with them, and I thought we had the basis to build a new future.

And then the next day, when we went out to the site, with the two——

Q. That was quite a day.

The President. Yes. It was amazing, wasn't it? Let me tell you one thing that I took away from all this. Because we've been working on this for 8 years now, and our point person on this, nonmilitary point person, has been Hershel Gober, when he was Deputy Director of Veterans Affairs, and then Director. And he did his tours in Vietnam. He was in two branches of the military service. He has a real feel for where all the veterans are. But one of the things I was talking to him about is that when we started this 8 years ago, and our relationships with the Vietnamese were somewhat more halting, they kind of wondered why we were so obsessed with finding the remains of 2,500 people, because they had still 300,000 people that they were missing, and they know a lot of them are just blown away in bombs, and they'll probably never find them.

And the feeling was that the Government of Vietnam thought that this was—was this real, or are we just so obsessed with individual people, and why do we care this much about it? But the more we worked on it, and then we started sharing data with them—you know, I took 350,000 pages of material there, and we're going to try to give them another million pages of material before the end of the year—I could never believe that the Vietnamese people felt that way, because it's one of the most family-oriented cultures in the world.

And if you read that wonderful novel by the North Vietnamese soldier, "The Sorrows of War"—you've seen it?—I mean, there's one whole section in there where this guy who was a veteran from the time he was a teenager, at the end of the war, in '75, he is in charge of a unit trying to find information about people who are missing. And so to me, one of the things that I got out of this, it really confirmed my hunch that the Vietnamese people, they care a lot about this, too. They sympathize and respect what we're trying to do. And they're glad we're trying to help them do the same thing, even though their losses were staggering and far greater than ours on any scale of things.

The integrity of the event was amazing. When I looked at all those villagers out there, stomping around in the mud, trying to find pieces of metal to recover the proof that those two young men's daddy was in the ground there—I mean, it was just an overwhelming emotional experience. But I think the point I want to get to is that I think that this is not a Western or an American obsession. This is something that they feel every bit as deeply as we do, and I think it has kind of helped to bring us together as a people.

And you saw in the streets—of course, 60 percent of the country is under 30, and only 5 percent over 60—they are very much into their lives and their future, and they're ready to get on after it.

Third Way Democratic Politics

Q. Mr. President, there's been a lot written about how you redefined the Democratic Party and turned it in the direction of the Third Way. I guess the question that comes to a lot of people as you leave office is how transferable your vision is, how lasting Third Way Democratic politics will be, and what this recent election really says about that?

The President. Well, I won't answer the third question, partly because I don't know the answer.

Q. About the election, or what it says about the election?

The President. Yes, the whole business about the election. A, I don't know the answer to who won the election, and B, I don't know that. But we'll have lots of time for that. Remember what Jack Kennedy said when he won the Presidency. He said, "Victory has a thousand fathers, and defeat is an orphan." So we'll all have time to sort of dig around over the bones or celebrate the victory, depending on what happens.

But first, let's back up and say what I believe. I never believed—this is an argument I used to have with my friend Reverend Jackson all the time; I don't suppose we've finally resolved it yet—but I never believed there was an inherent conflict between the traditional objectives of progressives and liberals in the Democratic Party and what I thought of as the Third Way or the New Democratic approach.

What I felt was, from my perspective having been a Governor all during the eighties, and looking at Washington, was that the country had become polarized, and the rhetoric of Washington had a paralyzing rather than an empowering effect. Now, we've had a lot of fights here, since I've been here. A lot of it has been mean and bitter and tough and ugly. But nobody has been paralyzed. We've gotten a lot of stuff done. You know, most of what I said I wanted to

do in '92, we've accomplished. And the Republicans got some of their business done, too. We did some things. A lot of things happened here. And so I think that it has changed the politics of America.

I mean, basically—let me back up a second. My whole theory of this new Democratic Third Way is that when you go through a period where the human affairs change, and we're in a period of enormous change in all of human affairs, how we work and live and relate to each other and the rest of the world, you have to find an approach that works, that explains the way the world is and opens up people to take the necessary actions to keep moving forward.

And what I thought when I ran in '92 was that there were—Washington, and the country because of Washington, was paralyzed into all these either/or choices. Either you invest in education, or you reduce the deficit. Either you took care of the poor kids on welfare, or you made their parents go to work. Either you protected the environment, or you grew the economy.

And what happened was, very often nobody could do anything, because they'd just fight, or they'd make decisions that didn't make a lot of sense. So let me just—to go back to basics, when I said in '92 that I thought we ought to organize our Nation around a vision for the 21st century of opportunity for every responsible citizen, a community of all Americans, and America leading a very different world toward peace and freedom and security, to me, that was really real. And what it meant was, instead of either/or, I tried to find some "both" solutions, some win/win solutions.

And a lot of people criticized me at the time. They said, "Well, he doesn't have a foot in either camp. Therefore, he must not have any convictions." But that's not where I saw it at all. For example, I didn't think we could have an economic policy that would work unless we both got rid of the deficit and invested more in education and science and technology. I didn't think we could have a welfare reform policy that worked unless we both required people to work and then rewarded work and helped them with their kids, with the food stamps and the Medicare and all that—Medicaid—because that's the most important work of any society. I didn't think we could in the end sustain an environmental policy if everything we did in the environment hurt the economy.

I thought we had to find a way to clean up the environment and preserve it and improve the economy. I didn't think we could have a crime policy that would work unless we had more police and more prevention. And I thought just the rhetoric of having more punishment was—it sounded good, but it wouldn't lower the crime rate. I didn't think that—in the Government, we reduced the size of Government and increased its activism. I wanted to take on a lot of these diversity issues, race and gender and gay rights. But I thought I had—and I brought in an unprecedented number of people from minority communities into the Government, but I thought if I didn't also have a high standard of excellence, that I would fail; that you had to prove that diversity and community and excellence, that they all went hand in hand.

So to me, this whole so-called New Democratic approach was a way of synthesizing our values and our policies in a way that would work. And probably the test of all this is whether it worked or not, and I think that if that's the test, that we pass.

And if you look at the debate in this election, to go back to your election question, if you look at the debate—I remember the first time I heard Governor Bush give his compassionate conservative speech. He was out in Iowa, and everybody was sitting around on bales of hay. And I thought, this is pretty good; this basically says, "Okay, I'm a New Democrat, except I'll do more of it with the private sector than the public sector, and I'll give you a bigger tax cut."

Now, we obviously felt that the differences were much more profound. But the point is that it shows the extent to which the idea of finding a synthesizing, progressive movement that unifies instead of divides people has captured the public imagination.

Q. So you think it will last, or too soon to tell?

The President. I think it will last if that's the only way to get stuff done. For example, if you look at the fact that the Congress is now more closely divided even than it was before, and it was pretty closely divided before, I think that if you want to fight, you can fight and have a dead-even split on everything. If you want to do things, I think it will be possible to do quite innovative things in the next 4 years, important things. But in order to do it, you'll have to define a dynamic center, which is what I've

tried to do. I've tried to restore a vital, dynamic center to American life.

President's Policies and Conduct

Q. Mr. President, sort of following up on that, given how over the past couple years virtually every poll has shown a strong generic issue advantage for the Democrats on almost every issue, except this one lingering problem of morality and values—given how hard you had worked, in your first term especially, to make personal responsibility and sort of join personal responsibility with opportunity and community, and how successfully you seemed to be able to do that, do you feel any regret or responsibility that the issues of the last 3 years and impeachment and so forth, that you bear any responsibility for the Democrats having problems in that regard now?

The President. Well, I don't know. I think the evidence of that is, to put it charitably, mixed. The big problem there is, that was the way—it was that way when I took office in '92. It was that way in '88. We were making some headway, but, look, a big part of that is—I think it's wrong, by the way. I think it is dead wrong. But a big part of that is that married—especially white, married Protestants, the biggest voting block in America, tend to identify things like the abortion issue—even though people are basically pro-choice, the pro-life crowd tends to get a morality edge there, and the gay rights issue have had a lot to do with that, among a lot of people who measure these things.

And I think the Republicans, frankly, are much more—because they are less likely to want the Government to do anything, that is, in terms of affirmative social programs, for 30 years, and certainly for 20 years, since President Reagan—have been much more likely to talk in rhetorical terms that are value laden and instructive. And if you just listen to them, the Democrats are much more likely to be talking about, "Here's what we want to do." And they're much more likely to talk about, "Here's what's right and wrong."

And I think that with a certain group of people, our advocacy of gay rights and our pro-choice position has reinforced that. Even when people disagree on the issue, they may give them credit for sort of being more stern and more righteous and more moral and all that.

Q. So you think it had more to do with those kinds of policy things than with whatever personal——

The President. I know it did. Yes, because otherwise, you have to believe that the American people are guilty of guilt by association, and I don't believe that. I don't believe that voters hold one person responsible for another person's mistake. I mean, that's an insult to the American people. That acts like if you do something—if you write a piece about me that I think is dishonest, I wouldn't condemn the New York Times. [*Laughter*] I wouldn't say—if you say something about——

Q. We get that all the time. [*Laughter*]

The President. No, but if you write something to me that I think is terrible, I say, God, there must be something wrong with Sanger because he worked at the same place. I just don't believe—you know, people are not like that. I don't think that—people are fundamentally fair-minded, and whatever their judgments of me are, by the same token, they—two-thirds of them disagreed with the impeachment process, but they didn't, all of a sudden, declare the Republicans immoral for doing it.

See, I think that might be the best illustration of it. I mean, the Republicans——

Q. From the other side, then?

The President. Yes. So I think if somebody makes a personal error, I don't think it gets transposed onto the whole political scene in any kind of lasting way. I think that if you look at the history of this, I think that the Republicans have really been very, very good at sort of adopting the family values rhetoric and doing all this, and they stick with it. And I think when we push the envelope as we have on the gay rights issue, or we stand up and fight for the pro-choice, I think they got a lot of benefits out of their partial-birth abortion advocacy, even though I thought it was—the issue was wrongly stated, and I didn't agree with their position, as you know.

I just think that a lot of these things—these are the issues that they hear about. I'll give you another example. There is one other example where they're on a big issue lead. How in the world could they have kept the lead they did on national defense after the record of the last—you know, we reversed the declining defense spending under the cold war. We had a successful conclusion of the conflict in Kosovo, and the Vice President was out there having

a 20-year record on all of these issues and actually advocating, at least at the moment, spending more money than his opponent was in the campaign, but they kept the lead in that.

So I think a lot of these things, they build up over a long period of time, and people develop certain takes on them. I'm actually glad we took down their lead in a lot of—you know, they don't have the lead in crime and welfare and balancing the budget and managing the economy and managing foreign policy any more that they used to have, and that's good.

Q. Just at the risk of creating an impression of unfairness in the New York Times, could I ask you one other kind of corollary that's kind of really a philosophical question? I guess since as long as I've known you and as long as I've known people in your orbit, the thing that seems to be a common thread that all your senior aides have said over time is that your greatest strengths are inexorably, I suppose as all human nature is, bound up in some of your potential weaknesses, and that the same aptitudes and appetites that have made you the most formidable political person of your generation have sometimes got you in trouble.

I just wonder if you think there is any way that, over the last 8 years, somehow America could have had the best of you without getting the worst of you, or is it all sort of wrapped up in one package?

The President. Oh, that's a judgment for somebody else to make.

Q. You don't want to take a——

The President. Yes. You guys were wrong about Whitewater. I wish we had the—that Gertz piece was ridiculous, absurd on its face. I wish we could have had the great New York Times without that. It was like Wen Ho Lee, chapter one. I wish we could have had it. [*Laughter*] But we couldn't. So we still got the New York Times. Is the country better off for having the New York Times? Absolutely it is. Are we better off having the New York Times? Of course we are. I'll let—the American people will have to make that judgment.

Q. Let me ask you—is it ever a kind of thing that you would like to take a good crack at some day in your own writings or your own thinking about this, some day when there's perspective? Because I sense it's——

The President. I might. I might. I've been—nobody has any—most people have no idea about what, personally, I've gone through for the last couple of years—and I might do that. But I did the right thing not to do it—this point, because the people hired me to do a job, and I got up every day and did it.

The price I paid for my personal mistake was, believe it or not, more than anything else, a profound personal price. I'm glad that I saved my family. I'm glad that my life is happy and in good shape, and I'm glad my country is still in good shape. But that whole episode was fundamentally a political move. It was not rooted in any established principles of Constitution, or law, or precedent. And so, you know, I didn't have time to be as personally reflective or harshly judgmental of myself, except for once, as I would otherwise have been inclined to do, because I was finding it too hard to save what we had worked for and the direction the country had taken.

And I just think that one of the things I hope—and I saw it in this election—I noticed that there was much less appetite for the politics of personal destruction in this election than there had been in many others, and I hope that maybe that's one of the consequences of all that I did, and maybe—I mean, what we all went through—and maybe that will be something that's really good for the country over the long run. Maybe nobody else will ever have to go through this.

Modern News Cycle and the Presidency

Q. Can I ask you one other thing about the changing universe you talked about, and—obviously you've been the President who has presided over this enormous flowering of the information age. Usually, you cite that as an incredibly good thing. I happened to see Waldman on Charlie Rose last night who was very thoughtful in talking about the one colossal difference between your predecessors and you was, the world knows your flaws in real time now because of this endless kind of news cycle. Is there any way in which that's been a personal burden for you or an institutional burden for the Presidency that you think is problematic or potentially a challenge for your successors?

The President. Well, let me just say, I think one of the challenges that I think that we have is, although—let me back up—the short answer to that question is yes, but it's also a great opportunity. If you live in a world of the 24-hour news cycle, it has to be managed and dealt with. I mean, one of the things that—you have

choices in dealing with it. But for example, if you watch in this election coverage the last 2 or 3 weeks, the two sides made very different choices. And you can draw your own conclusions, and we probably won't know until we see how it all comes out, whether the choices they made about how to deal with it had any impact on the outcome or what it was. But there were different choices made.

The trap really is not to forget that while you have to manage and deal with and respond to the 24-hour news cycle, it's still a job. And it's a job with a term—4-year term—or if you get lucky, it's an 8-year term. And it matters what your ideas are going in, whether you have a clear vision of what you want to do, and whether you keep doing the job.

So for us, the challenge was both—and sometimes, we would fall off the tracks either way for the first year or two—you know, sometimes you ignore the demands of the information-intensive environment which you're in, and even if you're doing the job, nobody knows it, and you could get totally derailed and never get to finish.

Q. Because you're not seen as doing it——

The President. Yes, you're not managing it. On the other hand, I think what is more likely to happen, what you're more vulnerable to doing—and this is, I think, what we tried never to have happen, even when we were going through the whole impeachment thing, is you don't wall off enough people who keep doing their job. They say, "What is the mission here? What do we get hired to do? How are we going to do it? Who is going to work on it? And how are you going to keep doing it?" And then you've got all these people that are managing the 24-hour news cycle, and how do you integrate the two so that you don't have a total disconnect?

But I think that is a unique challenge. I might say with all respect, I also think it makes your job harder. I mean, by the time you get around to writing something—this is something that you can do that television can't do. This is important, what we're doing now. You're going back retrospective, evaluating what's—for the future and all that kind of stuff.

But if you think about what it's like—I think about this all the time—by the time the evening news comes on at night, more than half the time, whatever it is they're talking about has already been on CNN five times. Now, we know that not many people have seen it, not in the grand scheme of things, but psychologically it still affects—well, what do you do, what would you do, for example, if you were putting together the evening news at night instead of in your business you are doing? Would you report it in the same way that you would have if CNN had never broken it in the first place? You could, rationally, because not that many people have seen it, but I think it affects what you do.

Okay, then by the time you write about it for the next morning, you know it's already been on CNN 20 times and it's been on the evening news twice. So everybody in America knows this thing, whatever this thing is, has happened, so how do you write about it? Or, to put it in another—what about another major story you've got that wasn't on the news at all? How does it affect the way you present it and develop it in the context of what you have to put in the paper because of what has happened in the 24-hour news cycle?

So it's not just the politicians. This whole thing is—and I think having all these talk shows and—is it sort of the blurring lines between all the distinct media areas. I think that's also a problem.

One of the things that I think newspapers are supposed to do is help people think. And one of the things that bothers me about a lot of the talk shows is, it seems to me that they're designed to confirm whatever your prejudice is and actually keep you from thinking.

For example, I think some of these people would be kicked off the shows—for example, suppose Bill Press looked at Mary Matalin one day and said, "You know, I never thought about that; you're really right." [*Laughter*] Well, they would have to get somebody else to represent the Democrats. You see what I mean? [*Laughter*] I mean, God forbid you should listen to what the other person is saying, because you might find some wisdom there. And so, from my point of view, that's exactly what we ought to be trying to avoid.

My whole view of the world is that we're in a new aspect of human affairs. Nobody's got a pointer on the truth. Nobody is totally right, and we need to be doing more listening to each other and trying to find common ground.

The best example of that this year was the work we did, Denny Hastert and I did, in trying to put together this new markets legislation,

which I still hope and pray will pass when the Congress comes back. Because the Speaker did a lot of good work on that, and we took a lot of their ideas; they took a lot of ours; we got a good—but this is the milieu in which you operate and in which the next President will operate.

But on the other hand, let me say this: There are vast benefits to it as well. For all of the problems, there are vast benefits. If the President has to make an unpopular decision—Kosovo, the Mexican bailout, whatever, you name it—at least a significant percentage of the people who hired you to do this job know what you're doing and why from your perspective. They don't have to get it secondhand.

You may not make the sale—you arrive on the air. You're just being repeated on CNN 20 times or whatever, the way it all works. And then you come and tell the next day, and you analyze it and all, but you may not make the sale. But at least you've got your shot.

Q. In those two examples, did it make a difference in Kosovo and the Mexico bailout? Can you say that those would have been less successful if you had not had this direct approach?

The President. I don't know. I don't know, because I think if I had—I can't answer that. I can't answer whether—in the Mexican case, it may not have made any difference, because by the time the election rolled around, it was obvious that what we did worked. In the Kosovo case, it might have been more difficult to get off the starting blocks if I hadn't had access to the American people direct. That would be my guess.

Somalia/Bosnia/Rwanda

Q. Talking about foreign policy for a second, I wonder if I could talk about Somalia and ask you—given your experience in Somalia when Colin Powell was still the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs in 1993, do you think that made you overly hesitant to go into Rwanda and Bosnia? And, given your successful intervention in Kosovo last year, what advice would you give to the new administration in similar situations?

The President. First of all, I know you all have a lot of questions, and I'm trying not to give long answers, so I'll try to——

Q. You saved us our speech there. [*Laughter*]

Q. I'm happy for a long answer. [*Laughter*]

The President. But the short answer to your question on Somalia and Rwanda and Bosnia is that I do not believe what happened in Somalia affected Bosnia, and really not Rwanda very much, and let me explain why.

What happened in Somalia was as follows: General Powell came to me one day, very near the end of his term, and says, "Aideed's crowd killed these Pakistani peacekeepers who were there with the Americans. We are the only people in the mission there that have the capacity to arrest Aideed. They want us to approve the Americans who are otherwise there as peacekeepers having some people devoted to try to—his apprehension and arrest." I said, "What are the chances of success?" He said, "I think we've got a 50/50 chance to get him, probably not more than a one in four chance to get him alive," something like that.

But he said, "I think you ought to do it." So I said okay. I asked him if he thought I ought to do it, and he said, "Yes, I do. On the balance, I think you should, because you can't just walk away from the fact that these Pakistanis were murdered."

What happened was, that was the extent to which anybody ever asked me about any of this, that in terms of the operation—we learned a lot from that Somalian thing in terms of what kind of operational control we should have in United Nations missions. I don't think we learned that we should never be involved in U.N. missions and work with other people and all that; I don't believe that. But from my point of view, I thought it was sort of a *sui generis* thing. I didn't believe it meant that we could never go anywhere else.

The problem in Bosnia was trying to develop enough of a consensus with our European allies to get something done. And lamentably, we were making progress and then—but the massacre of Srebrenica basically galvanized our NATO Allies, and they were willing to support a more aggressive approach that we and the British had favored all along.

But I think the important thing for me in Bosnia was that the United States should not be acting unilaterally there. We should be going with our allies, and we should be doing everything we can to move. I wish it hadn't taken 2 years to put together a consensus, but it's worked out pretty well now, given how messed up it was when we started.

In Rwanda, I think the real problem was that we didn't have a ready mechanism with which to deal with it, which is why after Rwanda,

we started working on this Africa crisis response initiative and why we were working on training all these Africans to do—Sierra Leone—we were going to work with them and help them, and I also frankly think that it happened so fast.

As it turns out, in retrospect, maybe we and the British and French could have—four or five others—gone in there with a relatively small number of troops and slowed it down. But if you think about it, all those hundreds of thousands of people who were killed in 100 days and hardly anybody had a gun, and I think that we were not really properly organized to deal with it and respond to it.

I hope and believe now that we are and, were such a thing to happen again, we would be able to play our proper role. I also think the Africans, you've got to give them a lot of credit. They're doing a lot better, too. They wanted to be part of this training for Sierra Leone. Mandela got all those people together to try to head off another Burundi and tribal slaughter, and it might work yet. I went over there to help him, as you know, in Arusha.

So I don't think that Somalia—if you think I made a mistake in either Rwanda or Bosnia, I don't think that Somalia is the reason we did it. Because I always thought that Somali thing was just—had much more to do with the fact that we hadn't worked through the command and control and policymaking issues when we were in a U.N. mission that had one mission and then all of a sudden had a very different one when we had to go try to arrest somebody.

I think whatever the problems in Somalia are, they need to be viewed on their own bottom, and I don't think—at least for me, they weren't some demonic nightmare that kept me out of these other places.

Race Relations

Q. Mr. President, a couple of domestic issues, and then I'm going to run to Andrews and meet you in New York. Race relations. It can be said that the state of race relations has never been better. I'm sure you're not going to argue with that. And another observation one can make is that black people, black politicians supported you, gave you tremendous support in some of your toughest political moments. I want you to try to explain an interesting dynamic, though. Some of your—many of your policies, especially earlier in your Presidency—welfare reform, the abandonment of the fiscal stimulus package, support of the death penalty—were opposed by these traditional civil rights leaders, these minority politicians. How do you reconcile this? What's going on here?

The President. Well, first of all, I had a record on civil rights matters and relations with blacks that went back through my whole public life, when I started. I also probably had more extensive personal contacts and friendships before I started—not so much in the Black Caucus and the Congress, but I mean in the country—than any white politician who had run for President in a long time, because it's been such a part of my life; it was so important to me, and because of just fortuitous things. The first AME church was in Little Rock; I hosted all the AME bishops when I was Governor. We had black leaders from all over the country come back when we celebrated the 30th anniversary of Little Rock Central High School. Most of the black churches had their national conventions there at one time or another.

When I ran for President in '92, in Chicago, the county attorney, the man who is now president of the Cook County Board, Congressman Danny Davis, three aldermen, three Democratic ward chairs were all from Arkansas. [*Laughter*] We're all born there, part of the history of the diaspora after the war, you know.

So a lot of this was just personal, and I think that even when some people disagreed with some of my policies, they knew where I was on the big issues of race and civil rights and equal opportunity. I think that's right. And I think that the fact that when we got into welfare reform, they saw that I was going to fight for what I wanted—that I did think there should be mandatory work requirements, but I would not abandon the food stamps and Medicaid requirements for the kids.

Welfare Reform

Q. I'd like to really jump in and ask you about a welfare question because I think it fits perfectly here. What's your biggest worry about the future of the welfare bill? And let me give you a couple of possibilities here. Is it that Congress might someday cut the money, that the States will turn their backs on the very poorest of the poor, that a recession might come along and hurt these folks, or that the time limits will prove damaging?

The President. I think the biggest worry—first of all, I think if there is a recession that

makes it impossible for people to work, even though they're able-bodied, we have built in a big cushion of money in there. We gave the States the money in a block of money, based on the welfare rolls in February of '94—I believe that's right—which was the highest welfare rolls we'd ever had. So even though the welfare rolls went down, as long as they were putting it back in—so I think there will be an appropriate response.

What I've always worried about is that some of the people who would be hardest to place might be caught up in time limits because they superficially looked like they could work but that the States would not provide enough support to make sure they could get into and stay in the work force.

But the other major criticism of the welfare reform bill I just thought was wrong—and I think a lot of people didn't even know this at the time, meaning a lot of people who were writing about it—which is that, by agreeing to let the States set the benefit level by block-granting that money, I was somehow abandoning a Federal commitment to poor people. But the truth is that since the early seventies, States had been able to set their monthly benefits; they just couldn't go below where they were back then.

So when we started working on welfare reform, the support levels for a family of three—before welfare—varied from a low of under $200 a month in Mississippi, Texas, and one or two other places to $665 a month in Vermont. And everybody—so, in other words, they had, in effect, been setting their own benefit levels all that time.

What I was really worried about was the desire of the Republicans in Congress to block-grant the money going—to stop the food stamps and Medicaid for the kids. But I really felt that if we gave them enough money and they had to put more money into child care and into job training, into transportation, and all that sort of stuff, this thing would work pretty well. And I think it plainly has. But I am worried about the hardest-to-place, when you have a combination of tough times and people who may not care about them.

Democratic Party

Q. Mr. President, you're given a lot of credit for recreating the Democratic Party as a viable Presidential party. But your critics say that, on the other hand, when you came into office, there was a Democratic majority in the House, a Democratic majority in the Senate, and a majority of Democrats in the governorships around the country. And, of course, none of those majorities now exist. What happened? How do you explain these two trends?

The President. Well, I think—first of all, I don't know what the answer is on the governorships. Sometimes—I remember in the years when—in the Reagan years, there were times when we had, like, nearly 30 Governors, or maybe more, I don't know. We had tons. So I think sometimes it's hard to make hard and fast judgments.

Q. ——maybe State-by-State anomalies, just things happen?

The President. I don't know that. I don't know the answer to that. It may be when you had a Republican Governor, people wanted—and a Republican President, people wanted Democratic Governors more. I don't know. All I'm saying is, I don't know the answer to that.

In the Congress, I think we had a combination of two things. First of all, all the Democrats will tell you that we had a lot of older Democrats who represented districts that had grown more and more Republican over the last 20 years. And when they retired, we were going to have a hard time holding them.

And then I don't think it's complicated; I think I got in and I adopted an economic plan that they characterized as a big tax increase, and the benefits of it weren't yet felt, and people weren't sure whether they were getting their taxes increased or not then. I adopted a crime bill which the NRA told everybody was going to take their guns away, and people hadn't felt the lower crime rate or seen the community police on their streets, but they heard the fear. And I tried to pass a health care reform and failed. So that when you fail, people can more easily characterize what it was you tried to do, even if what they say you tried to do has no relationship to what you tried to do.

And we almost had the reverse of what happened in '98. What happened—so a lot of our people, our base voters in the '94 election, they were kind of sad that welfare reform didn't pass—I mean, health care didn't pass. They didn't know about—they didn't know how they felt about this economic plan because they maybe didn't feel their lives were better yet.

And they didn't perceive that the crime rate had come down yet.

So we were running in the worst of all environments, and I basically have some significant responsibility for that because I jammed a lot of change through the system in a short time. And maybe politically, I made a mistake not doing welfare reform in '94 and trying to put health care off until '95 or '96. And maybe it would have been less. I think we would have lost seats in any case because of the dynamics of who was running and what the seats were and all that. But I think that it was much worse than otherwise it could have been. And it's pretty much what happened to Harry Truman when he tried to do health care reform.

I mean, basically, we sort of repeated the cycle of history. And I just made an error. And I felt terrible about it, and I spent the last 6 years trying to undo it. We picked up several House seats in the '96 election, and then in '98, when we won seats in the House and didn't lose seats in the Senate, is the first time in 122 years that in the sixth year of a Presidency, the President's party picked up seats in the Congress.

And this year we did immensely well in the Senate races, because for the first time in 6 years, for the first time we had a good rotation, and we had good candidates. And because the House was so close, the energy of the Republican right—the public energy of the Republican right shifted from the House to the Senate the last 2 years. And I think that's one of the reasons that we did better in the Senate.

When Hastert became the Speaker, they tried to present a more moderate image. I mean, there are lots of other things—I haven't had time to analyze all these House races—but we're in the position we're in partly because we were going to lose some seats which had been moving Republican when our senior people retired or got beat, but also because of all the things I did in '93 and '94. And one of the things I feel badly about is, I think that those decisions were good decisions. I think one of the reasons I got reelected in '96 is because the economy was in good shape and we were getting rid of the deficit, and a lot of the people who made the decision to do it paid the price.

The same thing on the crime. We celebrated the anniversary of the Brady bill today. Now over 611,000 people have not been able to get handguns because of the Brady bill handgun checks. But we lost a dozen House Members over it. And there's no point in kidding around about it. They did—I mean, the NRA took them out. And now, of course, all those voters, if they had a chance to vote again wouldn't do that, because now they know, after all, they didn't lose their handguns; they didn't lose their rifles; and they didn't lose their opportunity to go into deer season. But at the time, they didn't know that.

So what I tried to do after the '94 elections was not to slow down the pace of change but to figure out how much I could jam through the system in any given time and to make sure that if we were going to do something really controversial, we tried to sell it in advance a little better. Because I don't think there's any question that we lost more seats than we would have if I hadn't done the economic program and the crime bill and the health care in 2 years.

Health Care Reform

Q. Is health care your biggest regret?

The President. Well, I regret the fact that there are a lot of people in this country who still don't have health insurance. But we finally got the number of people without insurance going down again, for the first time in a dozen years, because of the Children's Health Insurance Program triggering in. So we're moving on it.

And I suppose on a policy front, that certainly ranks right up there. I wish we'd gotten—I wish we'd been able to do more. But we got the number of uninsured people going down, and now we know how to do it, interestingly enough.

I think in next year, I think the Congress ought to let the parents of the CHIP kids buy into it. I think they ought to let people over 55 buy into Medicare, as I proposed. There's three or four things you could do to dramatically reduce the number of people without health insurance in a piecemeal basis.

But let me say—people say, "Well, why didn't you do that back in '94?" The reason is, we didn't have the money to. If you want to provide health insurance, universal health insurance, there's only two ways to do it. It's not rocket science. You've either got to require the employers to offer the health insurance and then give a little financial—a tax break to the people who have a hard time providing it, or you have to pay for it with tax money. And we had just

raised taxes in the economic plan of '93 to get the deficit down. And we didn't have any money, so we couldn't raise taxes, and we didn't have—and the economy was not strong enough for the Congress to feel comfortable putting the employer mandate on it.

So I think—that was my mistake. That wasn't—I've always thought that my wife took too big a hit on that. That was—I asked her to come up with a universal plan that maintained private health providers. And there aren't any other options, and neither option, frankly, in 1994 was politically doable in that Congress, and maybe not in the country by the time the interest groups got through mangling on it. So that was my mistake, and it's one I have to live with—like all my other mistakes. [*Laughter*]

Q. Mr. President, we know your ride has arrived, so we'll try to——

The President. Yes, I don't get to do this much more, so you don't want to cut me out—[*laughter*].

Economic Globalization and Opposition

Q. But to go back to where we started, you've clearly done more than any President has in history to describe the opportunities to both Americans and foreigners about what globalization, what global markets are going to do for them. Yet, around the globe you hear more anger at America now about its primacy, its economic and its military strength, its cultural strength, than ever before, certainly than when you came in in '93. Was there something that you could have done differently, or something that you would advise your successor to do differently to diffuse this anger?

I'm talking about, in part, the kind of anger you saw at Seattle, not downstairs but upstairs, among the countries that were getting in the way of your agenda.

The President. Well, first of all, I think when you are—most people didn't think we were worth resenting in '92. [*Laughter*] They had pity for us. They thought, "How sad it is, America can't pay its bills. They've got this deficit," and all that kind of stuff.

I think a lot of the resentment is due to the success that we've had, and a lot of people feel that we have not done as much probably as we could have to share that success. But a lot of things, like little things like the unwillingness of the Congress to pay our U.N. bills and stuff like that, that grates on people.

But my sense is that most countries, even though they disagree with the United States from time to time, or they don't like what they see as our unilateralism when we disagree with them, still have a lot of respect for this country and still believe that we basically mean well in the world, and that—I think the answer is that we have to keep—there isn't a silver-bullet answer—the answer to this is, we have to keep working along to work with other people to try to find common ground where we can in an increasingly interdependent world. I think that's just the short answer.

Look, on the trade issue, the interesting thing about Seattle was—both in that room, as you pointed out, and in the street, is you had people who acted like they were marching in solidarity who had diametrically opposed positions. I mean, my friends in the labor movement who were there, they believe that globalization is bad because people in other countries work for a little bit of money and sell into America and knock folks out of jobs that have to have more money to live. But a lot of the people in those developing countries who were marching are mad at America because we, almost alone among the advanced countries, would like to have a global trading system that has minimum labor and environmental standards. And so a lot of them thought that's my indirect way of being a protectionist, in protecting the good jobs in America and keeping them poor.

And I think a lot of this—I don't have a dim, a pessimistic view of this. I think a lot of this was inevitable because of the scope of change and because—frankly, because there are a lot of societies where the last 10 years have been pretty tough. But I think if you take a broader view, if you look over the last 50 years, it's plain that global integration spawns more economic opportunity, creates wealth in wealthy countries, and creates more opportunities in poor countries, if they're well-governed, if they have good social safety nets.

So I think—let me just say, this is a big issue with me and rather than just talk on and on about it—remember, I went to Geneva twice to speak about this; once before to talk about child labor at the ILO, and once at the WTO. I went to Davos to give a speech about this, as well as to Seattle. I think that one of the four or five biggest challenges in the next 20 years will be creating, if you will, a globalized system with a human face. You cannot have

a completely global economy without having some sort of global social understandings.

So you're going to have more political interdependence; we're all going to have to be working more together; more concern is going to have to be evident for the poor. One of the things that I'm proudest of about this last year is that we got bipartisan agreement—I give the Republicans credit for working with us—on this big debt relief initiative to help the poorest countries of the world, but only if they take the savings and put it back into education, health care, and development in their own country. This is a huge thing. And it's part of putting a human face on the global economy.

So I think that my successor and his successor will be struggling with this whole issue of a global capitalist system and how you create the kind of underpinnings to make people believe it can be a more just society. And I think the resentment against the United States is altogether predictable: We seem to be doing well, and they're not.

And I also think, on the foreign policy front, if you have to use power to achieve an objective—and anytime you start shooting people, some unintended consequences will occur, and it's easy for people who don't have that power to resent it, which is why you have to wear it lightly—you have to be careful.

Highlights of the President's Term

Q. We have a couple of really quick—at the risk of sounding like Tim Russert, we have some quick, snappy—as you look back on your Presidency, what was your single best meal? [*Laughter*]

Q. Apple would never have forgiven us if we didn't ask.

The President. Oh, my God.

Q. Does anything come to mind?

Q. It could have been that restaurant in Saigon that last night.

Q. Well, while you think about that, what was the most outrageous request you ever received from a Member of Congress?

The President. Let me say, I loved the Bukhara meal we had in Delhi.

Q. Oh, at the hotel there. I ate there with the First Lady.

The President. I loved it. I mean, I can't say that was my best meal. I probably liked some—one of the Mexican restaurants in Phoenix, or something. [*Laughter*] But I liked Bukhara.

The most outrageous request I ever got from a Member of Congress?

Q. You don't have to name names.

Q. Just the request.

The President. That's such a good question. [*Laughter*] What I'd like to do, it's such a good question, I'd like to talk to a couple of our guys and let's think of all the crazy things—"Well, if I vote for you, will you have a picture taken with my grandchild, or something?" I mean, it's crazy. But let me think about it. Because we may be able to come up with something that's really, really good.

Q. We'd even take the top three. [*Laughter*]

The President. The 10 greatest reasons.

Q. Favorite foreign trip?

The President. Oh, boy. That's really hard. I loved India. I liked China. The Vietnam thing was—but I suppose Ireland, 1995. I suppose, just because my mother's family is Irish, and we're—our oldest known homestead is in Roslea, which is right on the border of Northern Ireland and the Republic.

Q. ——know what day—you lit the Christmas tree at Belfast City Hall, and Van Morrison sang "Have I Told You Lately That I Love You," dedicated from you to the First Lady.

The President. Yes. Van Morrison. Were you there?

Q. Yes, I was there.

The President. What a great day.

Q. Froze my tail off, with Anne Edwards' hands on my behind.

The President. And the trip to Derry. And Phil Coulter was singing "The Town I Love So Well."

Q. What was your best speech?

The President. I don't know. I think the speech I gave in Mason Temple in Memphis in '93 was good. It was a good one. I think the speech I gave at the convention this year was pretty good. But I really don't know.

Q. Worst speech?

The President. Oklahoma City was pretty good, because I was overcome by—I don't know. I don't know that anybody is a good judge of his own or her own speeches. I'm not sure.

And I don't know what my worst speech was. My worst speech, certainly in historical terms, was the nominating speech I gave for Dukakis in '88. [*Laughter*] People are still making jokes about it—although I thought—I got 700 positive letters, and I found out that 90 percent of them

heard it on radio. [*Laughter*] Isn't that funny? We actually checked.

Q. How about single best campaign event?

The President. Oh, wow.

Q. Where you really felt connection with everything.

The President. When I knew I wasn't going to die in New Hampshire. When I was in Dover, right before the election, and I gave my—I just was talking off the top of my head. Curtis Wilkie sent me a tape of this once, the speech I gave, and that was my famous "I'll be with you till the last dog dies" speech. And I walked out there, and I thought, this is not over. We are not dead.

I remember that. But I had so many wonderful campaign events. I remember, we went to Akron in '92—they've got an airplane hangar that holds blimps, the dirigibles. It's like the third-biggest covered building in America. And I got up there and I said, "It doesn't look like there's many people in here." And John Glenn said, "It's cause it takes a quarter of a million people to fill it. There are over 50,000 people there, and it means you're going to win Ohio." And that's what—I knew if we won Ohio in '92, we'd win the election. I remember that was a great night.

But I had so many wonderful—I can't remember my single greatest campaign event. But I love that moment in that hot building in Dover, New Hampshire, in '92; I knew at least I wasn't going to die in New Hampshire.

President's Future Plans

Q. You're not going to run for mayor of New York, are you?

The President. Not anytime soon.

Q. What does that mean? [*Laughter*]

The President. It was very flattering. I mean, but, no. I have to work. It costs a lot of money to support a Senator. I've got to go to work here. I've got to get out there and—Hillary supported me all those years; I've got to get out there and do it.

I'm going to try to be—I'm giving a lot of thought and talking to a lot of people about how I can use these years and my experience and my knowledge to have a positive impact. I want to be a good citizen of our country and have a positive impact around the world, but I have to do it in a way that is appropriate and that does not get underfoot of the next President. The next President needs time, and especially now after all these events, will need time to bond with the American people and get up and going. And so I have to think through—that's what I'm doing now, thinking through exactly what I want to do and what the appropriate way to do it is.

But I think if you look at the example of Jimmy Carter, it's possible to be quite useful to the world when you're not President anymore.

Q. You sound so passionate about globalization. Do you think you—and having a human face on it—do you think you might be able to work with that?

The President. Absolutely. Absolutely. I believe in that. But there's lots of things to do. I'm very interested in economic empowerment, poverty elimination. The thing that—we're never going to be able to sell this globalization thing unless we prove that ordinary people can benefit from it. That's what we've got to do. Real people that show up for work every day have to benefit.

One of the problems we've got in the Middle East right now, and I'm desperately—we're killing ourselves trying to get it back on track—is that the average Palestinian income is no higher today than it was when we signed the peace accords in September of '93. Now, there are special facts there; I know that. But we've got to prove—if you want democracy to last, and you want free enterprise to last, which I think is important to freedom, it's got to work for ordinary folks. It worked for ordinary people in America; that's what's sustained us here.

The great thing about this economic recovery to me is, I tell everybody, this is what I call positive populism. We made more millionaires and more billionaires, but the highest percentage increase in income in the last recovery was in the lowest 20 percent of the people. And so this is the first recovery in three decades where everybody got better at the same time. And I just think that's so important.

Q. And on the Palestinian front, those special facts have kept the peace process from moving forward.

The President. Yes.

Q. And it's hard to combat that in a month.

The President. But I think Barak actually—this deal that he made for new elections, early elections, and the other guys really didn't want to go right now, I think it opens a new avenue.

And they are obviously working—they're obviously trying hard, both of them are, to bring this *intifada* under control now, I think.

Q. And then you step in.

Press Secretary Jake Siewert. We've got to go.

The President. I can't tell you—let me just say this: I'm working hard on this. I always have, and I always will.

Q. Thank you, sir. You should have been in Tallahassee. It's unbelievable. You just can't believe what's going on there.

The President. Well, when this is all over, we'll have a conversation about it. But right now I need to be the President. [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The interview began at 3:30 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House, and reporters David Sanger, Todd Purdum, Marc Lacey, Robin Toner, and Jane Perlezof participated. In his remarks, the President referred to Vo Viet Thanh, chairman, People's Committee, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam; President Tran Duc Luong, Prime Minister Phan Van Khai, and Communist Party General Secretary Le Kha Phieu of Vietnam; civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson; President-elect George W. Bush; Bill Gertz, reporter, Washington Times; former Los Alamos National Laboratory scientist Wen Ho Lee; "Crossfire" cohosts Bill Press and Mary Matalin; former President Nelson Mandela of South Africa; former Senator John Glenn; and Prime Minister Ehud Barak of Israel. Reporters referred to New York Times chief correspondent R.W. Apple, Jr., and Tim Russert, moderator, NBC's "Meet the Press." The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 28. A tape was not available for verification of the content of this interview.

Remarks Announcing the Global Food for Education Initiative
December 28, 2000

The President. Good morning, everyone; please be seated. First, I want to thank Senator Dole and Senator McGovern for joining me and for their leadership. I thank Senator Dorgan and Senator Leahy for being here; Representatives Hall and McGovern; Catherine Bertini, the Executive Director of the U.N. World Food Programme; Jacques Diouf, Director-General of the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization; Sven Sandstrom, the Acting President of the World Bank; representatives of nongovernmental organizations; and all those who have worked to make this global feeding initiative a reality.

I also want to especially thank Secretary Summers, Jack Lew, and the White House staff who worked so hard on this in what, in Washington time, is a very short period of time to put this all together. [*Laughter*]

This morning we gather just 3 days after Christmas, the second day of Eid Al-Fitr, a few hours before the last night of Hanukkah, a time sacred to men and women of faith who share a belief in the dignity of every human being, a time to give thanks for the prosperity so many enjoy today, but also a time to remember that much of humanity still lives in astonishing poverty. Nearly half the human race struggles to survive on less than $2 a day; nearly a billion live in chronic hunger; half the children in the poorest countries are not in school. That is not right, necessary, or sustainable in the 21st century.

The most critical building block any nation needs to reap the benefits of the global era is a healthy population with broad-based literacy. Each additional year spent in school increases wages by 10 to 20 percent in the developing world. Today, however, 120 million children get no schooling at all, 60 percent of them girls. So this year in Dakar, Senegal, 181 nations joined to set a goal of providing basic education to every child in every country by 2015. At the urging of the United States, the G-8 nations later endorsed this goal at our summit in Okinawa.

Experience has shown here at home and around the world that one of the best ways to get parents to send their children to school is a healthy meal. That's why today I'm very pleased that we are announcing the grant recipients who are going to help us put in place our $300 million pilot program to provide nutritious meals to schoolchildren in developing countries.